

Platte Valley Habitat Partnership

Second Collaborative Workshop,

Saratoga, June 22, 2012

Notes

Tom Ryder, Assistant Wildlife Division Chief, opened the meeting and gave an overview of how the Platte Valley Habitat Partnership (PVHP) originated. Tom stated the PVHP is a spin off from the Platte Valley Mule Deer Initiative (PVMDI) and work on the objectives and strategies identified in the (PVMDI) will continue to be addressed simultaneous to the work of the PVHP. Tom stated the Laramie Region will report back to folks in November on the status of the PVMDI.

Tom reminded all the 500,000 dollars for habitat work will be housed within Wyoming Wildlife - The Foundation.

Jessica Clement reiterated there are two parallel efforts:

- The PVMDI, which will address predation and management challenges.
- The PVHP which is focused on the landscape and habitat improvement for mule deer.

Jessica Clement stated the goal for today's meeting was to create a common understanding of what is habitat. She provided a review of her situation assessment (interviews with many different stakeholders she conducted in May) and provided highlights from this work. Dr. Clement provided a review of the collaborative learning and collaborative process and reminded all the process is focused on improvements and not silver bullet solutions. She stated she is hired by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, but stressed her role as a neutral 3rd party facilitator who works for the PVHP group.

Jessica Clement reviewed the outcomes from the first workshop, the process to get to the desired results and reviewed the timeline for completion of a habitat plan (May, 2013). Jessica reviewed the process guidelines for the group and asked for consensus from participants on agreement to follow the guidelines – all gave a thumbs up.

The process is illustrated below:

Platte Valley Habitat Plan Collaborative Process As Amended by PVHP May 18, 2012

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
Gain common understanding of issues, definitions and process.	Collaborative Learning: Mule Deer Nutritional Needs, Vegetation Ecological Dynamics, Potential Improvement Actions	Determine what steps PVHP wants to take to address habitat improvement in Plan #1	Determine Monitoring Variables to track change. Monitoring logistics. Create Adaptive Management Feedback Loops in PVHP	Draft Plan Review Publish Plan May 2013 New: Step 6 Implement Plan and Collaboratively Adapt
August	December	February	Late March	

Will Schultz, Saratoga Wildlife Biologist (WGFD) provided a habitat presentation on the basic habitat needs of mule deer (see <http://wgfd.wyo.gov/web2011/wildlife-1000813.aspx>).

Flipchart Notes:

- We need to establish criteria to prioritize types of habitat and parcels of habitat for inclusion in the first habitat plan. We should do this in September.
- What are we comparing habitat conditions to? What is the difference in habitat now vs. 20+ years ago.
- Baseline data on habitat is being compiled by the USFS and the Conservation District.
- Has deer adaptability been included in WGFD calculations of where they are? Have they been adapting to human presence?
- We need historical data from the USFS, BLM, Conservation District and NRCS.
- Also need to establish current conditions.
- We should try out experiments on smaller scales.
- Fire: when, where, what size, unintended consequences.
- Livestock manipulation might be a tool.
- Keep paying attention to water and water levels.
- Different responses at different places and different times. Site variability is great.
- As beetle kill increases, so will the quantity of grass and herbs in limber pine and lodgepole pine.

- Don't forget elk.
- What does improved habitat look like?
- Need multi-successional plans. Humans have disrupted succession.
- Mule deer habitat improvements can and should benefit livestock too – but how?
- Watch out for golf course mentality.
- Consider pre- and post-treatment use. How does it affect users, what use by livestock and elk will be appropriate?
- Look at patchiness and distribution of habitat and interrelatedness to other factors.
- Mob grazing is a tool, used to happen a lot with sheep and positive results were seen.

Following Will's presentation, Ryan Amundson, Wheatland Habitat Biologist (WGFD), discussed some of his recent observations of conditions on important winter range areas. Ryan discussed the importance of a field tour. Ryan stated there are opportunities to work in transitional ranges and stressed the importance of these areas in getting deer to the winter ranges in good condition and rejuvenating deer as they leave in the spring. Ryan discussed some of the challenges of working in the Platte Valley including the Sage Grouse Executive Order, cheatgrass, mixed land ownership, and the need for rest following treatment. Ryan identified the critical need for landowners to have flexibility and options for grazing livestock if they are to participate in habitat treatments. This will be a key piece of the puzzle for the PVHP to address in order to get private landowner support and participation. Lastly, Ryan pointed out the need for Mother Nature to cooperate, which is especially apparent this year.

Jessica Clement opened up a discussion on the presentations. Some salient comments were made by participants :

Flipchart Notes:

- Address wind energy development on crucial winter range, impacts on number of wildlife. Look at BLM Wildlife impacts study. Also look at BLM reclamation practices.
- Look at peer reviewed publication regarding other impacts and other species. E.g. coal mine impacts on shrubs and their re-establishment.
- Look at Tony and Will's radio-collar data with antelope, sage grouse, deer, elk, etc.
- We need flexible grazing tools for deferment – grassbanks, etc.
- Need to find AUM's, find funding for transportation, grazing fees.
- We need a "Grass Banks Working Group": Look at Thunder Basin for good information.
- Invasive species objective important.

Following this discussion, Jessica broke participants into groups to review range maps (prepared by Chris Otto with BLM). Jessica asked the groups to define the "Platte Valley" and identify Winter, Summer, and Transition ranges.

Following this break out group work, Jessica asked the group if it was acceptable to define the “Platte Valley” for the purposes of the PVHP, to include the 6 WGFD hunt areas that make up the WGFD Platte Valley Herd Unit. A consensus by thumbs up was reached. A consensus was also reached on the general location of Winter, Summer, and Transitional ranges.

Ryan Amundson presented a power point presentation (see <http://wgfd.wyo.gov/web2011/wildlife-1000813.aspx>), regarding potential objectives for the PVHP plan. Following Ryan’s presentation, Jessica asked the group if there were any suggested objectives that really stood out. The group identified the following:

- The need for grass banks and producer flexibility to meet needs for participation.
- Invasive species such as cheatgrass
- Wind energy impacts

Jessica asked the group if they would allow her to create a subgroup to look into grass banks and rest options for private producers and report back to the main group. The group indicated consensus for this approach by show of thumbs. The following individuals agreed to work on this topic:

Clay Chris Williams, Cody Waldrop (?), Wendy Haas, Ryan Amundson, Neil Thargard, and Andrew Colter.

Field Tour Logistics

July 20th

- Field tour will be July 20th from 8AM to 5PM.
- Participants will be responsible for their own lunch and drinks.
- Participants should meet at the Platte Valley Community Center parking lot.

Flipchart Notes:

George Williams would like to show the group:

Areas with intensive grazing

Area treated with a road grader

Area where a burn was successful and another where a burn was not successful

- Exclosure
- BLM burn and deferment area.
- Other areas mentioned for viewing on July 20
- Cedar Ridge – crucial winter range
- South side of Pennock Wildlife Area – fawning/nursery area in transition zone.
- Summer range up from Pennock Wildlife Area.

August Meeting

- PVHP meeting will be held August 17th.
- A meeting for the evening of August 16th is being considered to specifically address partnership possibilities with private landowners.
- Location and time TBD

The PVHP website is up and running. Power Point presentations and readings will be posted on the website. The address is: <http://wgfd.wyo.gov/web2011/wildlife-1000813.aspx>

The site is also accessed from the WGFD homepage by clicking on the Platte Valley Habitat Partnership Banner.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 pm.

List of Participants will be posted at a later date.

Submitted by Jessica Clement and Richard King



Agenda - Draft - Second Workshop
Platte Valley Habitat Partnership
June 22, 2012
Saratoga High School, Saratoga, Wyoming

- 9:00 Introductions and Summary of Previous Meeting and Outcomes
- 9:30 Collaborative Process Discussion
- Guiding principles
 - Decision-making process.
- 10:00 Create a common understanding of Platte Valley Mule Deer Habitat
- a. What do mule deer need for habitat? What is good, mediocre or poor muledeer habitat? When, where, for what deer? What is winter, summer and transitional range for mule deer (Will Schultz)
 - b. What does the Platte Valley have and have not for mule deer habitat (Ryan Amundsen)
- 11:00 Create a common understanding of Platte Valley Mule Deer Habitat - Maps/Small Groups:
1. What is the Platte Valley?
 2. Explore the Platte Valley for winter, summer and transitional ranges.
- 12:00 Lunch
- 12:30 Large Group determine:
1. What is the Platte Valley.
 2. Mule deer ranges and habitat in the Platte Valley
- 1:30 Mule Deer Habitat Plan Objectives Discussion
- WGFD suggestions for mule deer habitat objectives for the first Plan (Ryan).
 - Discussion of habitat improvement objectives for the first plan.
- 2:30 Logistics for Field Tour on July 20th
Readings?
- 3:00 Adjourn